

W A S H I N G T O N  
**H I G H E R**  
**EDUCATION**  
C O O R D I N A T I N G   B O A R D

**October 2005**

## **Director's Report: Higher Education Needs in Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties**

### **Introduction**

The 2005-2007 state capital budget directs the Higher Education Coordinating Board to evaluate higher education and workforce training needs in Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties and recommend solutions to the legislature and governor. The board is charged with delivering an interim report of preliminary findings by January 15, 2006, and a final report by December 1, 2006.

Specifically, the law as enacted calls for the board to do the following:

- Assess the higher education needs in Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties
- Recommend the type of institution or institutions to be created or expanded to address those needs
- Assess potential sites for an institution
- Identify costs and a process for completing a master plan for higher education expansion in the study area

The budget directs the board to form a 13-member local advisory committee, including six state legislators, the Snohomish County executive, and two business or education leaders from each of the three counties (see local advisory committee membership list, Attachment A).

### **Status**

The consultant team of NBBJ and MGT of America has been hired and is currently conducting focus group interviews with business leaders and employers, interest groups, educational institutions, and Native American leaders and educators, and reviewing past studies and supporting documents. The members of the local advisory committee have been appointed and a separate technical review group, the project coordination team, has been formed to review and discuss materials in advance of the local advisory committee meetings (see project coordination team membership list, Attachment B, and project work plan, Attachment C).

On September 7, a project leadership summit was held at Everett Community College with both groups. Upcoming meetings will focus on review of demographics, forecasts, qualitative/quantitative needs, and early thoughts on role and mission and needs analysis. Town Hall meetings with the public are scheduled to be held November 15-17 in the following order: Skagit County, Island County, and Snohomish County.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

Project Coordination Team: October 19, 2005 at Skagit Valley College, Mount Vernon  
November 2, 2005 at NBBJ Offices, Seattle

Local Advisory Committee: October 28, 2005 at Everett City Council Chambers, Everett  
November 9, 2005 at University Center at Everett Station,  
Room 311, Everett

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## Attachment A

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## **Attachment B**

### **SIS Project Coordination Team**

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**Dr. Larry Nyland**

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**Dr. Steven G. Olswang**

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**George Smith**

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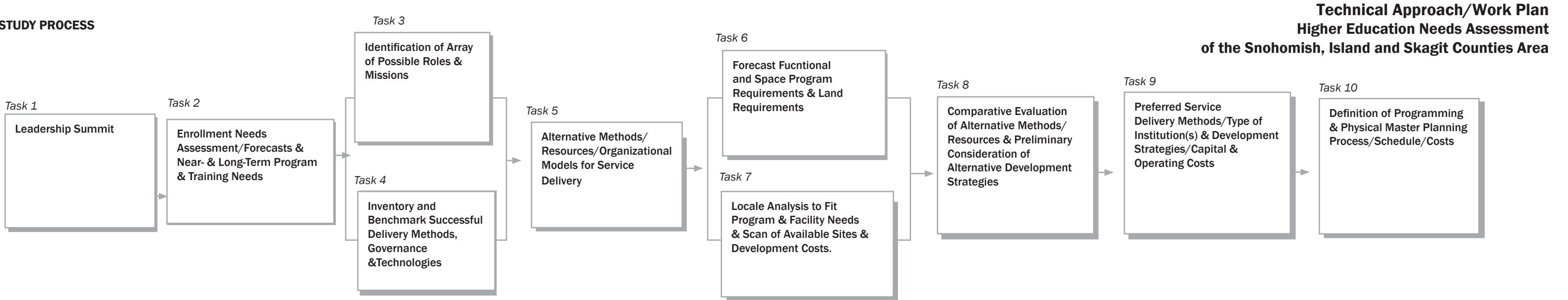
**Dr. Gary Tollefson**

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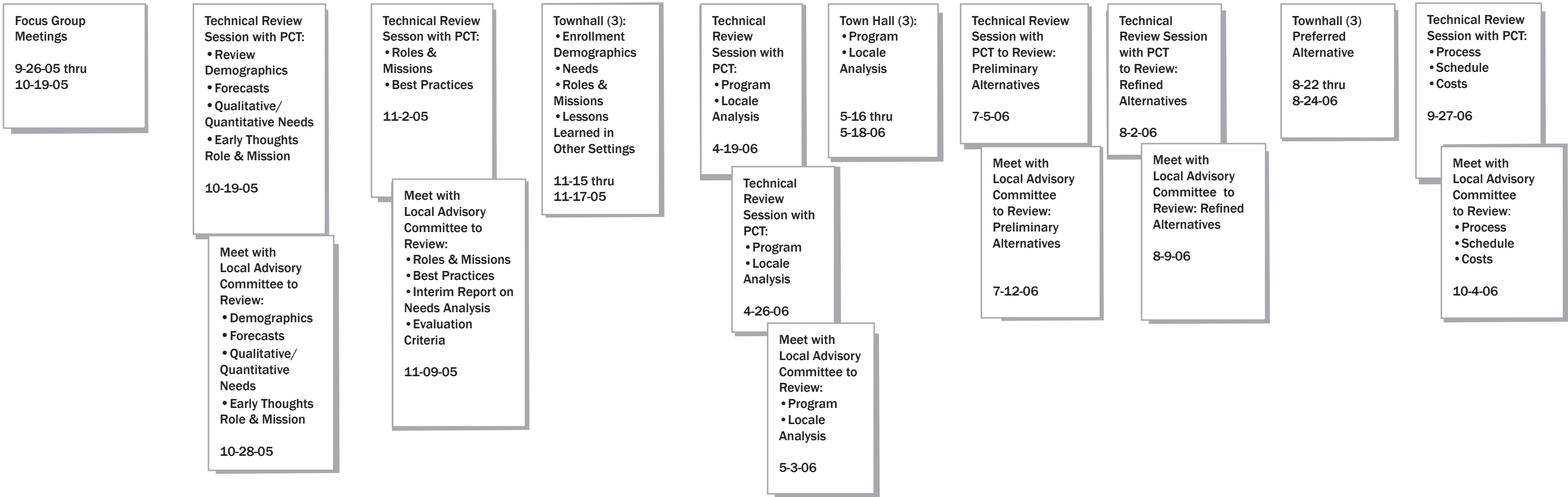
**Marc Webster**

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STUDY PROCESS



MEETINGS



DELIVERABLES



October 2005

## **Director's Report: Tri-Cities Higher Education Planning Update**

The Tri-City Industrial Development Council (TRIDEC) has formed a higher education committee in response to actions taken by the 2005 legislature, which authorized only limited lower-division expansion of Washington State University Tri-Cities (WSUTC). In HB 1794, the Tri-Cities branch campus was authorized to offer a four-year degree in biotechnology, subject to approval by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. But WSUTC was the only one of the state's four research university branch campuses that was not granted full authority to offer lower division courses and to admit freshmen and sophomores.

Since the session ended in April the TRIDEC committee, in collaboration with WSUTC, Columbia Basin College, and the Pacific Northwest Regional Laboratory (PNNL), has held a series of meetings inviting public comment into their formulation of recommendations regarding the future of higher education in the region. The goal of this project is to secure state approval to create a unique academic model for students in the region that will also stimulate economic growth in light of the projected closure of the Hanford nuclear site in 2015.

The commentary offered by citizens, community groups, and business leaders has revealed a wide range of opinions regarding the most appropriate path for higher education growth in the region. Members of the business community stress the importance of capitalizing on the concentration of Ph.D.-qualified scientists from PNNL to support a four-year institution focused on math and science. However, other community members contend that the expansion of Columbia Basin College (CBC), which currently serves thousands of place-bound students and the region's burgeoning Latino population, should be a higher priority. They have expressed concerns that creating a new four-year institution in the area could come at the expense of CBC.

Given the breadth of public opinion, the TRIDEC Higher Education Committee identified five options for expansion that were shared with the public in early September. Later this fall, the group plans to recommend a preferred option to the governor, the legislature, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The options include:

1. Improve Higher Education within the existing framework

Under this option, CBC would continue to serve students with academic, job training, and adult basic skills programs (including high school completion, pre-college programs and English as a Second Language). It would also remain the primary source of transfer students enrolling at WSUTC. WSU would expand its current upper-division and graduate offerings. The two schools would enhance co-enrollment and co-admission agreements to improve the integration of programs and services to students.

2. Expand higher education offerings via addition of other institutions

The two existing institutions would operate as they would in option No. 1. However, the community would encourage other four-year colleges to develop programs – not provided at WSUTC – to be offered at the community college. This model resembles strategies employed by a number of four-year universities to create “centers” on community college campuses outside of the university’s home region. For example, Eastern Washington University (located in Cheney) currently offers several bachelor’s degree programs on the Bellevue Community College campus.

3. Transition WSUTC to a four-year university with the WSU system

The branch campus would remain part of WSU’s system of campuses. However, it would offer a range of lower- and upper-division courses and limited graduate programs. The institution would grant baccalaureate and master’s degrees. The scope of its authority and mission would be comparable to those of Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, and Western Washington University.

4. Transition WSUTC to a new “free-standing” publicly-funded four-year institution including a graduate school

WSUTC would become a new four-year university, independent of WSU. The new institution would remain publicly supported and would have its own governing board. The new university would focus on four-year undergraduate education, but would also offer graduate programs similar to those of other regional universities. In addition, the institution would be closely aligned with PNNL with a curricular focus on science and technology.

5. Combine CBC and WSUTC into a new “free-standing blended” publicly-funded four-year institution including a graduate school

This option would combine the resources of CBC and WSUTC in a partnership with PNNL to build a new four-year university independent of WSU. Similar to option No. 4, this public institution would focus on science and technology and would have its own governing board. This option was originally recommended in 2004 by the Three Rivers Community Roundtable Higher Education Task Force (a business-led group), in response to the WSUTC self study mandated by House Bill 2707 in 2004. Options 4 and 5 are specifically focused on developing and enhancing science and engineering partnerships with PNNL to make the new school a “destination campus” for students who live outside the region.

One of the primary challenges facing the planning committee is that most state higher education funding is provided in response to current and projected enrollment. Though the WSUTC campus has experienced recent growth in enrollment, WSU Pullman reports that the campus did not increase enrollment over the preceding several years. Student enrollment patterns at WSUTC also present challenges. Administrators in Pullman report that the branch campus’s highest enrollments are in education, business, social science, and nursing, which do not align

particularly well with the proposed focus on science and technology. While enrollments in the university's new viticulture and enology program appear to be stable and likely to increase, the majority of students continue to opt for liberal arts instruction.

The HECB's role during the 2005 legislative interim has been to acknowledge the significant planning effort that has been undertaken by the community without the benefit of state funding. Further, the HECB has asked the planning groups to focus on the most appropriate role and mission for current and proposed institutions to ensure they meet the comprehensive workforce and educational training needs of the region. Any proposal for higher education expansion should focus not only on the interests of the business community, but also on the needs of the rapidly growing Latino population, workforce training students, and citizens whose work and family obligations require them to attend college near their homes. TRIDEC has committed to making a recommendation to the state by November 9, 2005. The board will review the proposal and consider making a recommendation to the governor and legislature at its December 15 meeting at the University of Washington Tacoma.